

OUTREACH

# Are You Afraid of the Dark?



**APPLE TALK**  
Rev. Bruce Lieske  
Founding Executive Director  
Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism

We need light to shine in the darkness. My brother and his family were among the millions in south Florida who were left without electricity in the wake of Hurricane Wilma. Their situation was unpleasant, to say the least, but my brother spoke enthusiastically about the night sky over Davie, FL, how the stars shone beautifully and brilliantly in the absence of the usual urban light glow. He did not praise the darkness, but only the stars which shone in the darkness.

Speaking of Jesus, the Apostle John says: "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it . . . The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." (John 1:5,9). We are painfully aware of all the darkness in our world: terrorists who murder children, radical Muslims who teach their children to murder Jewish people, sexual predators, greedy corporate executives, unscrupulous politicians who buy votes with the taxpayers' money, and yes, Christians who out of fear do not speak the truth in love — so the darkness deepens.

The ultimate darkness is hell. People usually think of hell as a place of fire, and that is correct. But we may overlook another aspect of hell. Three times Matthew quotes Jesus as describing hell as darkness,

weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) The old King James Version translates the Greek to *skotos* to *exoteron* best as: "the outer

"way shower" (as the false cult of Unity claims). He was simply saying that by trusting him — his crucifixion and resurrection — we have eternal life.

sentencing criminals. When Jesus died on the cross he was punished for the sins of the world — all sins. Completely. The Father's love for us compelled Him to have his Son take our punishment. Forgiveness is a total gift — available to all who trust what the Son did.

You would give a friend a flashlight if he was stumbling in the darkness. I know you would. As we approach the "Festival of Lights" and Christmas, reach out and give your Jewish friends the gift of the Light of the World. Send them a Hanukkah card with a personal message (Hanukkah begins at sunset on December 25). Invite them to church. Let the light of Jesus shine in your actions and words. Let God use you to call them out of the darkness. □

Have you ever thought about the fact that "day-light savings time" does not save any daylight? It simply rearranges it from evening to morning, or from morning to evening. I grumble about the whole concept two times a year. Maybe it expresses the human need for light in our lives when it is most convenient for us.

December is the month for two important "light" festivals: Christmas and Hanukkah. Hanukkah is called the "festival of lights" and celebrates the rededication of the ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Eight candles are lighted on successive evenings, clustered about a single *shamash* (servant) candle.

Christmas is the time when we celebrate the coming of the Messiah, marked by the fact that the "glory of the Lord" shone on the shepherds, signaling the birth of Messiah Jesus. And so we adorn trees with lights, display candles in our homes, and speak of Jesus who said of himself: "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12).

darkness." We could even say (as is popular today) "the extreme darkness." The darkness of this world is nothing compared to the darkness of hell. Are you afraid of the dark? I am.

That being said, and it needs to be said, God does not scare people away from hell into heaven. He reaches out with his love and grace, and invites us to be His friends — to live with Him eternally in heaven. I have heard people say that "there are many paths to heaven." But actually there is *no path* to heaven, no "map" or "route" or "formula." When Jesus said to his disciples in the upper room, the night before he was crucified, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father except by me," (John 14:6) he was not saying that he was a

God is love. God is just. We would not want a God who is only somewhat just — anymore than we would want a judge who was "easy" or careless about

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**STUDENT IN THE SPOTLIGHT** — Beth Argeroudis, a member of Lutheran Church of Providence-Deltona, FL and a student at Florida State University, performed her senior recital on October 15, 2005. She is a choral music education major; her performance included a variety of music, including pieces ranging from Baroque to musical theatre. Members of University Lutheran-Tallahassee hosted a reception for Argeroudis following the recital. Argeroudis, the daughter of Pete and Cheri Argeroudis, serves University Lutheran as the part-time church secretary and also sings in the choir. □

**Hurricane Katrina Aid**

## Thrivent Hurricane Katrina, Rita Aid Tops \$6 Million

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans announced in mid-October that it has reached its hurricane disaster response goal, with more than \$6 million going to provide immediate relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina. The majority of the funding is being

distributed through Lutheran disaster relief agencies with additional funding distributed through Thrivent chapters to nonprofits in affected areas.

In addition to the immediate assistance it provided, Thrivent Financial has pledged \$5 million to its Thrivent Builds with Habitat

for Humanity. This funding will address long-term housing needs in the Gulf Coast area through house building with Habitat for Humanity.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Thrivent Financial informed its 2.8 million members that it was pledging \$2 million to supplement funds raised and donated by members, \$1 for every \$2. Thrivent supplemented member donations to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod World Relief/Human Care; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Domestic Disaster Response; the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Committee on Relief; and Lutheran Disaster Response. The organization also provided supplemental dollars for its volunteer chapters that provided funding dedicated to hurricane relief.

As a result, Thrivent Financial members contributed or raised more than \$4 million to aid hurricane victims, and Thrivent Financial has now provided an additional \$2 million to supplement their efforts. □



**DISASTER RELIEF** — Members of Faith Lutheran-Marietta, GA, recently sponsored a Hurricane Katrina relief event. "Many displaced military families, as well as civilians, came through Dobbins Airforce Base in Marietta," explained Faith's pastor Rev. Greg Walton. "We supplied clothes, food, and some funds to help out." Shown here are Walton with Lil Day, Col. Steven H. Slick, Angela B. Pedersen. Walton is presenting Slick with a check for \$1000 to be used to help military families displaced and recovering from the storms. □

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